



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Media Contacts:

Tom Hudachko, UDOH

(o)801-538-6232 (m)801-560-4649

Pam Davenport, SLVHD

(o)801-468-2757 (m)801-209-0986

Health Officials Confirm Year's First Death Associated with West Nile Virus

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Public health officials from the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and the Salt Lake Valley Health Department (SLVHD) today announced the state's first West Nile virus-related death in 2007. The individual was a resident of Salt Lake County who died while hospitalized. According to the SLVHD, the patient was older than 65.

“This unfortunate death is a reminder of the seriousness of West Nile virus, especially to the elderly and those with other medical concerns,” said Dr. Dagmar Vitek, SLVHD Deputy Director. “For many people, West Nile virus infections cause only mild symptoms; for others, however, the infection can be very serious. And while it is late in the season, I urge residents to continue to take steps to protect themselves until the first hard freeze.”

As of Friday, Sept. 14, the most recent date for which data is available, there have been 28 confirmed human cases of West Nile virus so far this year. During the 2006 season, 158 human cases of West Nile virus were reported to public health; 53 of the cases were severe and there were 5 deaths.

“The risk of serious illness from WNV increases with age, but there is no age at which there is no risk,” said JoDee Summers, UDOH epidemiologist. “People should continue to take the necessary precautions to reduce your risk of being bitten by mosquitoes.”

Protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites by using mosquito repellents that contain DEET when outdoors from dusk to dawn. For extra protection, wear long-

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sleeved shirts and long pants while outdoors. Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors or in an unscreened structure and to protect small babies any time they are outdoors.

For more information on the West Nile virus visit the SLVHD Web site at www.slvhealth.org or the UDOH Web site at www.health.utah.gov

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.